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All veterans are reminded that the fastest way to inquire and secure the benefits you have earned is by visiting your local County Veterans Service Office. A listing of these offices is available at www.cacvso.org or at www.calvet.ca.gov/resources/database.aspx.

Vet Homes Get Zero-Deficiency Ratings

By Jeanne Bonfilio
 Staff Writer

Four Veterans Homes of California, recently surveyed for compliance with federal standards, passed with flying colors! The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) Homes in Barstow, Lancaster and West Los Angeles were each given a zero-deficiency rating. The Chula Vista Veterans Home received zero deficiencies after its survey was completed in December, 2011.

The annual surveys by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) review the independent care, assisted living and skilled nursing units of state veterans homes. Over 150 regulations are carefully reviewed, including patient care, staffing, life safety code, administration, physician services, use of outside resources, nursing, housekeeping, plant operations, human resources, accounting, admissions and dietary, just to name a few.



Veterans Home of California - Chula Vista

"I am very proud of our teams," said Robin Umberg, CalVet Undersecretary, Veterans Homes. "What made this possible is great leadership by our Homes' administrators, great teamwork by homes' staff and, most of all, great love for our mission of providing premier care in an environment that promotes dignity for all our veterans," she said.

Amenities at the Veterans Homes of California for all levels of care include: room and board; three meals

a day plus snacks; medical care and medications; optical care, dental care and podiatry services; transportation services to all medical appointments and off-campus activities; a beauty/barber shop; limited banking services; opportunities for worship for all denominations; a modern fitness center and exercise classes; a library; cable television; housekeeping and laundry services; and a variety of community outings. All Homes also offer a caring and

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SECRETARY'S MESSAGE...

Spring is in the air, and warm weather often brings out the best in us. In the spirit of the new season, I ask you to remember our veterans when you finalize your taxes this year. Helping veterans has never been easier! All you have to do is check the box on line 110 of your California Form 540 and write in the amount you wish to donate to the California Veterans Home Fund.

Donations will be used to purchase personal items for homeless veterans admitted into a California Veterans Home, to pay for funeral expenses not paid for by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other things that make life in our veterans homes more enjoyable and fulfilling.

I ask that you donate what you can to support California veterans and to encourage your friends and family

to do the same; if not this year then next year.

On another note, the CalVet Secretary's Conference is scheduled for April 27 at the California Emergency Management Agency facility in Mather, CA. The conference will provide another great opportunity for veteran service organization commanders, county veterans service officers, and other stakeholders to meet with the CalVet management and discuss issues important to the veteran community. RSVPs for the conference will be accepted via e-mail to carolyn.ballou@calvet.ca.gov. That will allow us to build the database necessary to send "green" invitations to future events.

As always, God bless you and our veterans.

<< ZERO

compassionate staff.

The Barstow Veterans Home is currently accepting applications, with no waiting list, for residency in the Independent Living and Intermediate Nursing levels of care. For Barstow Veterans Home admissions information, call (800) 746-0606, ext. 1, or visit the Home at 100 E. Veterans Parkway, Barstow, California.

The Lancaster Veterans Home is currently accepting applications, with no waiting list, for residency in the Assisting Living level of care. For Lancaster Veterans Home admissions information, call (661) 974-7035 ext. 6, or visit the Home at 45221 30th Street West, Lancaster, California.

The West Los Angeles Veterans Home is currently accepting applications for residency in the Assisted Living and Skilled Nursing Levels of Care, which also includes Memory Care. For West Los Angeles Veterans Home admissions information, call (424) 832-8203 or visit the home at 11500 Nimitz Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

Veterans considering assisted living are encouraged to apply to any of the beautiful Veterans Homes of California as soon as the need arises. Spouses are also eligible to apply with the veteran.

Veterans Homes of California are also located in Ventura and Yountville. Homes are currently under construction in Redding and Fresno. For additional information, visit the CalVet web site at www.calvet.ca.gov.



Easy Way for Taxpayers to Help CA Veterans

A simple check mark on your state income tax form this year can help veterans living in one of our California Veterans Homes live a more fulfilling life. These funds are used to purchase such things as personal items needed to care for homeless veterans admitted to veterans homes and to cover additional funeral expenses for those veterans without the means to pay.

“Donating to this worthwhile fund is an excellent way for the Veterans Homes of California to increase their Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Fund to help improve the quality of life for our deserving veteran residents,” said Peter J. Gravett, Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs.

“Please help promote this effort to individuals you may know who are looking for a way to help support veterans and the Veterans Homes of California. It is an easy way to give back to those who have given so much to our country. On behalf of our wonderful veterans, I thank you.

Veterans Home advocates are asking veterans supporters to donate to the California Veterans Home Fund when filing their 2011 California Income Tax Returns before April 17, 2012. The Fund is Code #417 on Line #110 of the California Form 540 for the 2011 tax year.

Service Dogs for Returning Wounded Warriors

Freedom Dogs, a nonprofit organization located in San Diego, is working to help wounded military members who return from armed conflict with PTSD and physical limitations.

Freedom Dogs pairs wounded warriors with specialty service dogs. The Partners Program provides a dog and its trainer on a short term, intermittent basis. The Partner for Life Program permanently places the specialty service dog with the wounded warrior. Animals must go through two years of intensive training to become a Freedom Dog.

The assistive behaviors of these dogs may include: retrieval skills (such as



a leash, keys or medical equipment), bracing to assist in getting in or out of a chair or the lifting of limbs, human animal bond (psychosocial support), assisted dressing and undressing, assisted opening of doors (appliance doors, cupboards, file cabinets), elevator buttons, handicapped door-opening, holding of items to be worked on (steadies or holds tools, utensils, tote bags), and carrying of items.

Both the Partner Program and the Partner for Life Program are offered at no cost to the military personnel. For more information, visit www.freedomdogs.org.

The total received by the State is divided and distributed among each of the six Veterans Homes of California. These beautiful homes were built as an expression of gratitude toward California’s veterans, and are located in Yountville (the oldest and largest State Veterans Home in the nation), Chula Vista, Barstow, Ventura, Lancaster, and the newest home in West Los Angeles, built adjacent to the USDVA Hospital. Two additional Veterans Homes are currently under construction in Fresno and Redding.

In 2010, Assembly Bill 1088 (Fletcher) established the “California Veterans Home Fund,” allowing taxpayers to donate directly to this fund from their State Income Tax refunds.

To date, from January 2011 through November, 2011, nearly 19,000 California taxpayers have donated \$210,720 from their State Income Tax refunds to this new fund to help the residents at the California Veterans Homes.



Meeting Needs of Women Vets

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) celebrated Women's History Month by recognizing the contributions all women veterans have made and encouraging you to consider the role of women in U.S. history, a role that embodies a tradition of service as old as the nation itself.

Countless women throughout history have heeded the call to serve our country, in times of domestic and internal strife as well as during peaceful eras. Sometimes they broke all conventions, other times they paved the way for more women; at all times they made a difference in the lives of those around them. Their strength and determination have been an inspiration to many.

Military service makes women strong; once they are veterans, the USDVA works to keep them healthy. However, sometimes the strongest among us have the hardest time asking for help. These may be among the increasing number of women

who return home from military duty as combat veterans, wives and mothers.

Their needs are complex and sometimes different from those who served and deployed before them. They challenge us in the USDVA to do things differently to meet those needs.

The USDVA must be visionary and agile enough to anticipate and adjust not only to the coming increase in women veterans, but also to the accompanying complexity and longevity of treatment needs they bring with them.

In the last few years, the USDVA has made significant progress in health care delivery for women veterans. Current VHA initiatives and programs include:

- Rolling out enhanced women's health care—comprehensive primary care from an interested, proficient and designated women's health provider at any access point—across facilities nationwide
- Enhanced mental health for women veterans
- Staffing of every USDVA medical

center with a Women Veterans Program Manager

- Training more than 1,200 USDVA primary care providers in women's health
- Supporting multifaceted research programs on women's health
- Improving communication and outreach to women Veterans
- Ramping up services for women veterans who are homeless
- Driving an awareness campaign to make the language, practice and culture of the USDVA to be more inclusive of women.

The USDVA recently launched a "Stories of Service" video series depicting the role of women in the military, available at www.womenshealth.va.gov. In these three- to five-minute video vignettes, women veterans spanning various eras and service branches talk about their experiences in the military and how the USDVA benefits worked for them.

The USDVA's Center for Women Veterans has helped them develop a unified approach to serving women veterans and works closely with veterans service organizations, women's organizations, state agencies, and other entities to recognize and honor women veterans.

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

By Ted Puntillo

Solano County CVSO

Veterans who have dependents may be able to use the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation program to provide some assistance to their loved ones when they are no longer here.

The Dependency and Indemnity Compensation program provides a monthly benefit to surviving spouses and dependent children of service members who die as a result of active military service. Surviving spouses of veterans may also be eligible for the benefit if the veteran died:

- After military service as a result of service-connected disability;
- Was rated with a 100 percent service-connected disability for more than 10 years; or
- Was released honorably from the service at the 100 percent disability rate and dies within five years of discharge.

Basic benefit rates for this program are \$1,195 a month, with an additional payment of \$233 if the veteran was rated 100 percent disabled for at least 10 continuous years prior to death.

This compensation payment is not income-based, and for the most part there is no minimum active duty service requirement, with the exception of some chronic diseases (such as Lou Gehrig's disease) that require a minimum 90 days length of service.

There a variety of scenarios where this payment could be available to dependents, so I encourage surviving spouses to come down for a benefit evaluation. For example, a Vietnam Veteran dies of a heart attack related to ischemic heart disease (decreased blood flow to the heart). This veteran had served from 1968 to 1970 and went to Vietnam; however, the veteran did not develop the heart condition until after the service time. Ischemic heart disease is a presumptive condition, and the spouse who was married to the veteran at the time of death could be eligible for this benefit.

It is important to look at the death certificate of the veteran and to read not only the cause of death but the contributory causes for death. For example, a veteran with a service-connected diagnosis for hypertension dies of a stroke or renal failure. There may be a correlation made between the service-connected hypertensive condition and the stroke or renal failure. If the hypertension is listed as a contributory cause of death, the surviving spouse

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Yountville Post Office Saved!

The Yountville Veterans Home Post Office will remain open despite having been considered last July for closure by the United States Postal Service (USPS). The announcement was made by Congressman Mike Thompson (CA-1) who represents the Yountville Veterans Home and led the effort against its closure.

After a long and careful review, USPS determined that the customer service options that would be left for veterans and staff would not be sufficient to meet their needs or the Postal Service's obligation to serve them.

"We are greatly pleased with Congressman Thompson's efforts for keeping the post office open at the Yountville Veterans Home," said Peter J. Gravett, Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs.

"Having convenient access to a post office is but one of the many benefits and services our veterans deserve for having worn our nation's military uniform."

The Yountville Veterans Home is one of the oldest in the nation and currently houses over 1,000 veterans, representing every era of warrior from World War II to the present conflicts. The residents range from those who are in the final stages of their lives to those who are trying to

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<< COMPENSATION

could have a good claim.

Other examples of correlations between service-connected conditions and death could be:

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or depression and suicide, and
- Diabetes and almost any type of body system failure that diabetes affects.

Prisoners of War have a laundry list of conditions that are presumptively service connected. There are not that many POWs anymore and thank

God for that. If you are the spouse of a POW who has died, you should contact this office to get a benefit evaluation.

Another aspect to this tax-free benefit is the surviving spouse receiving the benefit may forfeit the compensation if he/she remarries. However, if the dependent becomes single again due to death or divorce, that spouse will again be eligible for the compensation benefit from the former spouse. The rule is if the surviving spouse remarries before age 57, the benefit stops. After age

57 the surviving spouse may remarry without losing the compensation benefit.

One caveat is that the surviving spouse had to be married for at least one year prior to the death of the veteran to be eligible for the benefit. Dependency and Indemnity Compensation is also payable as if the death were service-connected, if the veteran dies as a result of VA examination, hospital care, medical or surgical treatment, vocational rehabilitation, or, since Nov. 1, 2001, a program of compensated work therapy.



Columbaria Project Completed

By Mike Coffey

Northern California Veterans Cemetery

At a cost of nearly one million dollars, ten new columbaria have been added to the Northern California Veterans Cemetery. Construction was started in December 2011 and the project completed in March 2012. The first inturnments in the new columbaria were made on March

12 of this year. These columbaria provide the cemetery with an additional 2,000 gravesites and are expected to provide above-ground niche burials for the next 10 years. The previous set of 6 columbaria exhausted burial space in November 2011. The completion of this project allows the cemetery to remedy a backlog of inturnments for veterans whose families preferred this burial option.

Major landscaping enhancements, road improvements, and the addition of sidewalks and benches were included in the scope of this project. The final product essentially completes the development of the first phase of the cemetery.

The new columbaria were made possible through a grant from the State Cemeteries Grant Program, USDVA, National Cemetery Administration.

<< MAIL

adjust from Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Yountville Veterans Home Post Office was the only post office on the USPS's potential closure list that is located in a veterans home. The USPS estimated that the closure of the Yountville Veterans Home post office would only save approximately \$1,000 per year.

In August 2011, Thompson wrote to Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe urging that he reconsider closing the post office. Thompson also worked with local town and county officials, the American Legion and the California Department of Veterans Affairs to oppose the closing of the veterans home post office.

Seeking State Help for Proposed Vets Cemetery

Organizers of a proposed veterans memorial and state cemetery near the Barstow Veterans Home traveled to Sacramento recently to seek state assistance with the project.

Marvin Ellis, chairman of the nonprofit Barstow Veterans Memorial Park Foundation, said he met with officials at the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) to learn more about the process for securing funds.

Ellis said the organization is hoping to eventually gain permission to construct the project on government-owned land near the Veterans Home of California in Barstow. If approved, Ellis said, building on public land would eliminate the expense of purchasing the land from private owners.

Building a new state veterans cemetery is “not an easy process,” said J.P. Tremblay, CalVet Deputy Secretary for Communications and Legislation.

The state does not have the resources to provide funds for construction and will not accept new facilities without a plan to pay for their operations, Tremblay said. Organizers who want to build a cemetery must raise enough money

to establish an endowment fund that can finance the cemetery’s operations in perpetuity, he said.

Organizers in Monterey County who are seeking to build a state veterans cemetery at Fort Ord are in the middle of this process, which has already taken more than six years, Tremblay said.

While grants from the USDVA may be available, they are given to state governments, not private individuals, Tremblay said. Therefore state legislation is required to allow the state to seek the federal grant and then distribute it to the project.

The organization would also have to obtain funding to cover construction costs. Ellis said it was too soon to know how much that would cost or where the money would come from.

Ellis said the project could be built in phases, with the memorial park constructed first and a cemetery eventually taking shape around it. Tremblay said a memorial park would have to be privately funded, as the federal grant would only cover a cemetery.

The USDVA has been in the midst of a cemetery building boom of sorts in the past decade — the largest since the Civil War, according to the department. Congress passed the National Cemetery Expansion Act in 2003, which authorized construction of six new national cemeteries, including the Bakersfield National Cemetery, which was built on land donated by Tejon Ranch. In 2007, the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery

opened near Dixon, and the Miramar National Cemetery in San Diego opened in 2010.

An area is more likely to receive a national cemetery if it is outside of a 75 mile radius from another one, Tremblay said, an area the federal government says rules out 90 percent of Americans. Barstow is about 72 miles away from Riverside National Cemetery.

California operates two veterans cemeteries: the Northern California Veterans Cemetery in rural Shasta County, which opened in 2005, and the Veterans Memorial Grove Cemetery, on the grounds of the Veterans Home in the Napa County town of Yountville.

The Shasta County facility recently received nearly \$1 million in grants for an expansion project, Ellis said, arguing that Barstow residents had reason to be optimistic.

“There’s money out there to do that,” Ellis said.

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www.desertdispatch.com/articles/organizers-12545-proposed-seek.html

Course for Vets/Families Struggling with PTSD

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) will offer a course for family members of veterans with PTSD or other anxiety/mood issues.

Family to Family—a free 13-week course beginning June 11 in Martinez—is taught by trained NAMI members who have lived with this experience. The course offers education and support for families and friends of people with mental health disorders. The course will offer information about how mental health issues affect your veteran, treatment and medication options, current brain research, how to care for yourself as you care for your loved one, how to cope with worry and stress, and more.

Course starts Monday, June 11, 2012, from 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. at the Veterans Martinez Campus, 150 Muir Road, Martinez, CA.

For more information or to register, call (925) 262-3404, e-mail snh2read@comcast.net, or visit www.nami.org.

VA Program Expands Healthcare Access

By *Dustin Silberling*
VA Public Affairs Assistant

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) Northern California Health Care System is offering new ways for Veteran patients to connect with care providers. The program, named Telehealth, features several different technologies aimed at meeting the USDVA's goal of Patient-Centered Care.

The program has three distinct components: Clinical Video, which allows patients in their local clinics to videoconference with physicians or specialists at other USDVA health facilities; Home Health Buddies, which provides electronic and telephone based monitoring devices in the patient's home for monitoring of certain conditions; and Store-and-Forward, which utilizes data, imagery, and sound capabilities in initial screening processes that can later be used to make clinical evaluations.

In addition to new technologies, the USDVA has created a new position, the Telehealth Clinical Technician, an integral part of the Telehealth program. According to NCHCS Telehealth Coordinator, Garnette Cotton, Ph.D., "these technicians are trained in both clinical and technical aspects of the program, and are tasked with ensuring a seamless connection of services, as well as offering comfort to the patient throughout the appointment process."

Each NCHCS Clinic will be staffed with a Telehealth Clinical Technician, who is embedded with the local Patient Aligned Care Team, and participates in community outreach and education efforts.

Although Telehealth is a great advantage for veterans who travel long distances for care, it's important to note that Telehealth isn't just for rural patients. Any veteran enrolled in the USDVA Northern California Health Care System can contact their primary provider or local Telehealth Clinical Technician to determine if Telehealth services are available to them. For more information visit www.telehealth.va.gov.

USDVA BRIEFS

USDVA Providing Credit Monitoring to Misidentified Veterans

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is offering free credit monitoring to more than 2,200 Veterans whose personal information, including social security numbers, was posted on Ancestry.com following the mistaken release of data through the Freedom of

Information Act. www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2250

USDVA Participates in Settlement with Mortgage Banks

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced its participation in the largest state-federal legal settlement in history that deals with problems within the mortgage industry. www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2267

Disabled Veterans Use Adaptive Sports in Rehabilitation

After 10 years of war, disabled Veterans are returning to new challenges, finding ways to live life to the fullest while overcoming their disabilities. Many have sought the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic to learn how to ski and rehabilitate using a variety of adaptive winter sports. www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2277

Missing in America Project

By Mike Coffey

Northern California Veterans Cemetery

The Missing in America Project (MIAP) Escort Riders escorted six veterans to the Northern California Veterans Cemetery for burial on March 14. The circumstances leading to the abandonment of these men and women upon death are generally unknown, but thanks to the research and follow-on efforts of the Missing in America Project, they were provided final military honors and the dignified burial they rightly earned.

Air Force Reservist Les Jetley of Dynasty Limo carried the veterans in a stretch limousine and the services were led by MIAP National Chaplain Bob Pasero. The Military Honor Guard consisted of a combined team of Army and Navy members and they were assisted by members of the Redding Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1934.

Research Roundtable Caps USDVA Celebration of Women's History Month

Improving the health and health care of women veterans is a high priority within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), said a panel of leading researchers on March 27.

"VA is committed to serving women veterans and it is our privilege to do so," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We are honored to sponsor research that supports the outstanding care our women veterans have earned and deserve."

USDVA's research commitment is multidisciplinary, covering the areas of biomedical, clinical, health services, and rehabilitation. To meet the needs of a growing, diverse demographic that spans all generations of women veterans —

from an aging population of WWII veterans to those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan—the pace of research activity in recent years has greatly accelerated.

"From building an extensive research network that supports top notch investigators to providing a strong foundation of knowledge for quality care, VA is addressing the diverse health care needs of this fastest growing segment of the veteran population," said Dr. Joel Kupersmith, USDVA chief research and development officer, who was the opening speaker.

Between 2004 and 2008, more research on the health of women veterans was published than in the previous 25 years combined. Today, USDVA supports a significant amount of research on a wide variety of health issues faced by women. In fiscal year 2011, the agency funded 60 studies for a total investment of more than \$12 million.

USDVA women veteran's health research focuses on:

- Returning combat women

veterans – gender differences with regard to Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), post-deployment behaviors, and reintegration;

- Understanding barriers and improving access to USDVA health care for women veterans;
- Long-term health outcomes of women who served during the Vietnam era;
- Expanding mental health research including PTSD, substance abuse, and sexual trauma; and
- Basic research (biomedical) on breast cancer including hormones, regulation, genetic factors, as well as autoimmune diseases.

To bolster support for investigators conducting women's health services research, as well as recruitment and inclusion of women veterans in a wider array of studies, USDVA Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D) launched the Women's Health Research Network (WHRN).

The WHRN includes two partnered

<< WOMEN

components: the Women's Health Research Consortium providing training and mentorship to researchers focusing on women's health research, and the Women's Health Practice-based Research Network supporting clinical research networks that test USDVA-based women's health-related interventions and studies requiring recruitment of women veterans at multiple sites. The former is headed by Elizabeth Yano, Ph.D., M.S.P.H.; the latter by Dr. Susan Frayne, M.P.H.

"Excellence in health care begins with excellence in research" said Dr. Robert A. Petzel, VA's under secretary for health. "VA research has put together a solid infrastructure that supports quality health care for

women Veterans."

Joining Kupersmith to discuss the ways USDVA research improves the health of women veterans were Dr. Sally Haskell, acting director of Comprehensive Women's Health for the Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group, and three leading researchers: Elizabeth Yano, co-director of the USDVA Health Services Research and Development Center for the Study of Healthcare Provider Behavior at the USDVA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System; Susan Frayne, associate director for development and staff physician at the Women's Health Center of Excellence, USDVA Palo Alto Healthcare System; and Dr. Donna Washington, M.P.H., program area lead, Women's Health and

Equity Strategic Program, HSR&D Center of Excellence for the Study of Healthcare Provider Behavior and staff physician at the USDVA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System.

The media roundtable culminated a month of activities sponsored by USDVA to recognize Women's History Month. It is the third in a series of media roundtables sponsored by USDVA's Office of Research and Development.

For more information about other roundtables, see www.research.va.gov/media_roundtable. For more information on USDVA Research, visit www.research.va.gov.



pay some overdue ticket fines for half the price. The discount does not apply to parking tickets or citations given for driving under the influence or reckless driving.

The following conditions also apply:

- Tickets must have been due before January 1, 2009;
- You cannot have made a payment since January 1, 2009;
- You must have failed to appear in court or not yet paid in full;
- You do not currently owe restitution to a victim in any case in the county where the ticket was issued; and
- You currently have no outstanding warrants in that county.

If you meet all of these requirements, you qualify for the program and will receive half-off all fines, fees and assessments, including bail. You must pay the entire amount upfront, although some counties may accept credit cards.

For more information, view the Traffic Amnesty video at www.youtube.com/match?feature=player_embedded&v=2jQdbhsGU9k or [contact your local Superior Court](#).

Traffic Amnesty: Half off Some CA Traffic Tickets

Got overdue traffic tickets? Through June 30, 2012, you may be able to take advantage of the State's one-time traffic amnesty program and

Apprenticeships Give Veterans a Trade

In March, the California Department of Veterans Affairs, the California Legislature, and Governor Jerry Brown honored Bea Cohen, California's (and possibly the nation's) oldest living female veteran.

She is one of the few people alive today who witnessed the beginning of World War I. At age four, she and her family watched as low-flying planes dropped bombs

BEA'S DREAM IS TO MAKE UPHOLSTERY CLASSES AND APPRENTICESHIPS AVAILABLE TO RETURNING VETERANS

on the factories next to her backyard in Buhush, Romania before emigrating with her family to the U.S. As an adult, she worked for Douglas Aircraft Company, working as a real-life Rosie the Riveter, one of thousands of female factory workers who contributed to the war effort by producing munitions and war supplies. Bea quit her job at Douglas to join the U.S. Army—even though the company offered her five cents more an hour to stay.

At 102 years old, Bea is now legally blind and quite hard of hearing, but she's still bright, clear headed, and very articulate. Amazingly, she still lives alone!

As it turns out, Bea is a huge fan of the upholstery industry.

From 1961 to 2011, Bea took upholstery classes, making wheelchair cushions and walker bags for veterans. She even learned how to upholster her own furniture. If the class had not lost funding, Bea says she would still be taking the classes today. Although she can no longer see the craftsmanship details, she often runs her hand over the edges of the upholstered piece on which she is sitting and says, "Oh, I wouldn't have done it like that."

Bea's dream is to make upholstery classes and apprenticeships available to returning veterans. "Give 'em a trade, not a handout!" she repeatedly says, waving her fist in the air. That's a good thought. An estimated 40,000 men and women are expected to separate from military service and return to California in the next year or so. Many, if not most, will be looking for jobs.

With all the skills and attributes that veterans bring to the table and the tax credits and other incentives available for hiring veterans, many employers are anxious to hire vets. Unfortunately, many occupations require work experience that veterans typically don't have. It is unlikely, for example, that a returning veteran could step into a job as an

upholsterer, meat cutter or stone mason without first completing an apprenticeship.

Apprenticeship is a system of learning while earning and learning by doing. The California Department of Industrial Relations Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS) can work with employers in any industry to create apprenticeship and training programs. These programs allow job seekers to gain employable lifetime skills and provide employers with a trained and experienced workforce.

According to Don Merrill, Veteran Representative with DAS, "Most any job that takes longer than 2,000 hours to learn can be turned into an apprenticeship. Trainee programs can be created for jobs that take less time to learn."

From offices around the state, DAS consultants work locally with employers (and their collective bargaining partners where applicable) to develop new apprenticeship programs and to determine the length of training and specific skills necessary to perform at the level required in the occupation. They help the new program sponsors locate and make arrangements with local education agencies to provide the classroom instruction that augments the on-the-job training.

DAS consultants can also help new sponsors develop the standards for their program operation, as well as apprentice registration procedures, a wage progression for apprentices,

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their program operation, as well as apprentice registration procedures, a wage progression for apprentices, and completing the elements comprising apprenticeship program standards.

An additional benefit for veterans and their potential employers who work with apprenticeship programs is the GI Bill which, in some cases, will pay for the one-the-job training portion of an apprenticeship program. The DAS can help arrange for payment of veterans training

benefits to eligible apprentices, and assist in outreach activities to attract apprentice applicants.

To learn more about giving veterans a trade, visit www.dir.ca.gov/das/das.html or contact Don Merrill at dmerrill@dir.ca.gov or (916) 263-0718.

LEGISLATION

AB 1823 (Yamada)

This bill relates to resident members in the Veterans Homes of California and requires the quarterly statement or accounting of all charges to include information relating to payment of any outstanding charges at the time of the veteran's death, including the use of a deceased veteran's personal property or money for payment of outstanding charges, and the terms and conditions upon which fees and charges can be changed. (Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee)

AB 1930 (Cook)

This bill requires the State Personnel Board to notify the department when any promotional examination for the establishment of an eligible list for state civil service positions is announced or advertised to eligible candidates. (Assembly Public Employees, Retirement and Social Security Committee)

AB 2248 (Cook)

This bill requires each entity of state government to give preference to a disabled veteran business enterprise when awarding a grant or contract

to provide social services to veterans and authorizes the department to conduct audits of qualified entities. (Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee)

AB 2475 (Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs)

This bill amends existing law that prohibits any sale, foreclosure or seizure of real or personal property subject to a mortgage, or the security, for nonpayment by the service member owner. Court orders and party agreements are exceptions to this provision and it establishes that a violation of this provision is a misdemeanor. This bill also extends the prohibition from 3 months to 9 months after the military service period. (Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee)

AB 2611 (Butler)

This bill authorizes superior courts to develop and implement veterans courts for eligible veterans with the objective of creation of a dedicated calendar or a locally developed collaborative veterans mental health program or system that leads to the placement of mentally ill offenders who are veterans in community treatment. A similar bill was vetoed by Governor Brown in 2011 and

Governor Schwarzenegger in 2010. (Assembly Public Safety)

SB 1197 (Calderon)

This bill amends the Personal Income Tax Law and the Corporation Tax Law and allows a credit against those taxes for a specified portion of the qualified first year wages paid to a qualified veteran. (Senate Governance and Finance Committee)

SB 1258 (Wolk)

This bill requires the department to establish a system for monitoring specified outcomes for veterans and to report these outcomes and requires reports to the Senate and Assembly Committees on Veterans Affairs on the establishment of the system and on any outcomes for veterans identified by the department. (Senate Veterans Affairs Committee)

SB 1297 (Blakeslee)

This bill requires the department to plan and construct a memorial plaque in the State Capitol Park to honor California Veterans who have fought and served in the War in Iraq and requires the memorial plaque and its maintenance to be funded through private donations. (Senate Veterans Affairs Committee)

The West Los Angeles Veterans Home is Currently Accepting Applications for Residency in the Assisted Living Level of Care



The Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles is a 396-bed, long-term care facility located adjacent to the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System in West Los Angeles.

Although two levels of care are offered, immediate space is primarily available in the Assisted Living Unit.

The Veterans Home provides California veterans with a living environment that protects their dignity and contributes to their feeling of self-reliance and self-worth.

The Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles offers two levels of care that provide continuity in the lives of residents in a homelike atmosphere of dignity and respect.

Assisted Living: Residents at this level of care require minimal assistance and supervision with some activities of daily living. Services may include care by licensed nurses.

Skilled Nursing Care: Residents at this level of care are provided 24-hour services of licensed nurses and certified nursing assistants. Skilled nursing residents have greater access to rehabilitation therapies, nursing care, pharmacy management, structured activities and clinical dietary services. A memory care program within this level of care provides a supervised environment for veterans with symptoms of confusion, memory loss, difficulty making decisions, solving problems or participating in conversations. These levels of care will be available in 2012.

Amenities include:

- Room and board – three meals plus snacks
- Medical care and medications
- Optical care, dental care and podiatry services
- Transportation services to all medical appointments and off-campus activities
- Additional services include a beauty/barber shop, multi-purpose room and limited banking services
- Opportunities for worship for all denominations through the Chaplaincy Program
- A modern fitness room and exercise classes
- Library and cable television
- Restorative Therapy Center
- Housekeeping and laundry services
- Caring and compassionate staff, and
- Variety of community outings and an enhanced activity program

The Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles enjoys the strong support from the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, the local community as well as camaraderie from the neighboring Los Angeles Air Force Base and many local Veterans organizations. Veterans Homes of California are also located in Chula Vista, Lancaster, Ventura, Barstow and Yountville.

For admission information, contact:

Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles
11500 Nimitz Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90049
(424) 832-8202
(424) 832-8203
Toll Free: (877) 605-1332
www.calvet.ca.gov

Free Surgery for Disfiguring Wounds

The Iraq Star Foundation, now in its fifth year, provides free aesthetic surgery for soldiers wounded in the Iraq and/or Afghanistan wars. 265 Board Certified surgeons in 44 states are providing their skills to remove shrapnel, treat burn scars, revise artillery scars, implant eyebrows, restore teeth, etc. If you have suffered a disfiguring wound, call the Iraq Star Foundation at (310) 245-6775 or (760) 568-4039 or contact the Foundation via email at info@militaryconnection.com.

Iraq Star's mission is to prevent the Iraq and Afghanistan wars from permanently disfiguring young lives. For more information and to view videos of events and news coverage of Iraq Star wounded receiving their life-changing surgeries, visit www.iraqstar.org.



Free Veterans Swim Program

The Department of Kinesiology at California State University, San Bernardino is offering free basic and competitive swimming lessons to any injured, ill, or wounded active duty or veteran service members. The goal is to improve all swimmers' abilities—from re-acclimation to the water to training for competition. One of the trainers is the head swim coach for the Navy Wounded Warrior Team.

To keep the coach-to-participant ratio low, a limited number of spots for each session are available and filled on a first-come, first-served basis. The class involves 5 swim sessions and a party for the participants on the last day. Classes are free but donations are gladly accepted.

The class schedule for the 2012 season is as follows:

- Saturday, April 28, 2012 - 0900 - 0945
- Saturday, May 5, 2012 - 0900 - 0945
- Saturday, May 12, 2012 - 0900 - 0945
- Saturday, May 19, 2012 - 0900 - 0945
- No Class May 26, 2012 - Memorial Day Weekend
- Saturday, June 2, 2012 - Swim Party / Coaches Party 0900 - 0945

For more information about the program or to register for a class, call (909) 537-5352 or e-mail sportfes@csusb.edu.



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CALVET



New USDVA Healthcare Clinic in Yuba City

There's good news for veterans in the Yuba City area. The USDVA Northern California Healthcare clinic, which previously shared space at the Feather River Tribal Health Facility, now has its very own space. The clinic will serve the approximately 17,000 armed service veterans who live in Yuba and Sutter counties. Among them are many former airmen from Beale Air Force Base.

This new clinic, located at 425 Plumas Boulevard in Yuba City, offers expanded services and appointment availability. In addition, the Yuba-Sutter County Veteran Service Office (CVSO) will provide walk-in assistance at the clinic on Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (closed for lunch). The CVSO can help veterans, their dependents, and their survivors connect with the federal, state, and local benefits and services they have earned through military service.

To contact the VA Northern California Healthcare clinic in Yuba City, call (530) 751-4500. To find the CVSO nearest you, visit www.cacvso.org. Click on "Contact Us," and then click on your county of residence.



Permanent Housing for Veteran Families—Wendy's Story

Until a few weeks ago U.S. Army veteran, Wendy, and her 14-year old son were homeless. As a single mother, she struggled for more than two years to find permanent work and affordable housing for her and her teenage son. Having known about Wendy's hardships, a Swords to Plowshares Women Veteran Coordinator called to tell her about the opening of new permanent family housing and how to apply. In less than two weeks, the lives of Wendy and her son changed. They moved into one of Swords' newly renovated 2-bedroom apartments. Having the stability and support she needed, Wendy landed a job at the VA Hospital where she can give back to fellow veterans.

"Swords is a Godsend—my saving grace," said Wendy. "They treat you like a whole person, taking in everything and digging in deeper to find the real situation in order to help. They don't just focus on your military service, but also what has happened in your life since then. They help you along the way, and have helped me every time I have needed it," she said.

Wendy and her son love their new apartment and the peace of mind living in a safe, family-friendly neighborhood affords them. Her son loves the freedom it gives him to ride his bike around the neighborhood and take advantage of

youth programs nearby. For many families these are freedoms they take for granted; but for Wendy and her son, it is a dramatic change from life in the Tenderloin, where rampant crime and drug-use caused so much worry. Now Wendy and her son enjoy the support of their new neighbors—all veteran families—who have helped them settle into the community.

For more information about Swords to Plowshares' Chinook Family Housing, visit www.swords-to-plowshares.org/?s=chinook+family+housing.



CALVET
 VETERANS HOME OF CALIFORNIA
 YOUNTVILLE

The Yountville Veterans Home has immediate availability for Applicants to Domiciliary and the Residential Care Facility for the Elderly (Assisted Living)

The Veterans Home of California – Yountville is a 1021 bed facility located in the heart of the beautiful Napa Valley in Yountville, California. It is the largest Veterans Home in the United States.

Although four levels of care are offered, immediate space is available in the Domiciliary Care Units and Residential Care Facility for the Elderly.

If admitted the Yountville Home, provides four levels of care to residents; providing continuity in care to the lives of residents in a homelike atmosphere of dignity and respect.

Domiciliary Care: Residents at this level of care do not require assistance and supervision in their daily living and receive room, board, and outpatient medical care.

Residential Care Facility for the Elderly: Receive everything found in Domiciliary Care plus residents at this level of care require minimal assistance and supervision with some activities of daily living.

2 levels of Skilled Nursing (ICF and SNF): Residents at this level of care are provided 24-hour services of licensed nurses and certified nursing assistants.

Skilled nursing residents have greater access to rehabilitation therapies, nursing care, pharmacy management, structured activities and clinical dietary services. Included is a memory care program within this level of care providing a supervised environment for residents with symptoms of confusion, memory loss, difficulty making decision, solving problems or participating in conversations.

Amenities Include:

- Room and Board – three meals and snacks
- Medical care and medications
- Optical care, dental care and podiatry services
- Limited banking services
- Beauty/Barber shop
- Opportunities for worship for all denominations
- State of the art fitness center
- Bowling Alley
- Coffee Shop
- Community Center
- Base Exchange Store
- Library
- Swimming pool and therapy pool
- 9-hole golf course
- 1200 seat Theater, Symphony, Plays and Concerts
- Picnic Grounds
- Baseball Stadium
- Creative Arts Center
- Music Program
- Napa Valley Museum
- Cable Television

The Veterans Home of California–Yountville enjoys the strong support from the Napa/Solano Healthcare System. The local community as well as camaraderie from the neighboring Travis Air Force Base and many local Veterans organizations. Veterans Home of California are also located in Chula Vista, Lancaster, Ventura, Barstow and West Los Angeles.

For more information, please contact:

**Veterans Home of California–Yountville
 Admissions Office
 260 California Drive
 Yountville, CA 94599
 (800) 404-8387
 (707) 944-4601**

Veteran Consumers Beware

Servicemembers and their families are often invited to introductory seminars or “free” meals in exchange for listening to sales pitches. Servicemembers may also be offered “free” services such as tax preparation or financial planning. To gain your trust, companies may even hire veterans as salespeople or use patriotic-sounding company names. Common sales topics include investments, financial planning, insurance, real estate, taxes, vacation homes, and wills and living trusts.

The California Department of Corporations warns veterans to be cautious! These may be ploys to gain access to your personal or financial information, making you vulnerable to identity theft. Or, you may be unknowingly authorizing payments for products you don’t want.

Before You Make Any Financial Decision

- Identify your financial goals;
- Consider how much financial risk you can tolerate;
- Consider cash flow, on-going maintenance, taxes and other related expenses;
- Research various alternatives. If you don’t have time, you may not be ready to spend;
- Verify that people who make money from your purchase have proper credentials;



- Verify their California licenses, work history, company, and products. Insist that salespeople disclose, in writing, all costs, service charges, penalties, fees, and commissions;
- Ask whether salespeople receive bonuses if you buy products they recommend;
- Ask about prepayment and early withdrawal penalties or fees;
- Make sure you will be able to access your assets if you need cash in the future;
- Only invest what you can afford to lose.

For more veteran consumer protection advice, visit Troops Against Predatory Scams at www.corp.ca.gov/Consumer/TAPS. Report concerns or complaints to the California Department of Consumer Affairs at www.dca.ca.gov/consumer/complaints.

Hand Cycling and Tandem Cycling Club Season Begins

Disabled veterans can enjoy hand cycle and tandem cycle rides in the Bay Area, Sacramento, Lake Tahoe and Reno throughout the summer. These rides, of varying distances, are for beginner to advanced cyclists. Paralympic Sport Sacramento has bikes for loan—both hand cycles for those with physical disabilities and tandem cycles for riders that are blind or have low vision. Register early to borrow a loaner cycle or to ask for a sighted volunteer to ride with on a tandem cycle. For more information or to reserve a bike, request a tandem partner, or volunteer, contact sacycle@sbcglobal.net.



African American Veterans with Diabetes Benefit from “Mentors”

African American veterans with hard-to-control diabetes made significant gains in keeping their blood sugar under control after working with “mentors” with similar health problems, according to a recent study by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA).

“This study is another example of the benefits VA research brings to all Americans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “The researchers have shown the potential for the effectiveness of a safe, low-tech approach that can significantly enhance the quality of life for these Veterans.”

Results of the study by the Philadelphia Veterans Affairs Center appear in the March 20 Annals of Internal Medicine. About one in five veterans who receives care from USDVA has diabetes. The study included 118 African American veterans, all of whom were having trouble controlling their diabetes.

Because the study lasted only six months and the study population of 118 people was relatively small, the authors say further research is needed. The new results confirm past studies in which mentoring helped patients with diabetes—particularly minorities—improve their medication adherence, diet, exercise, blood glucose monitoring, and glucose control.

“Peer mentoring appears to be an excellent way to enhance self-management for this group of patients,” says lead author Dr. Judith Long, an internist at the Philadelphia USDVA Medical Center. She also noted social support is a critical factor in helping patients manage



chronic illness.

The study was conducted by researchers with USDVA’s Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion, based in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, along with colleagues from the University of Pennsylvania and Carnegie Mellon University. Funding was provided by USDVA and the National Institute on Aging.

For more information on USDVA research, visit www.research.va.gov.

Stop Loss Pay Application Deadline Extended

The deadline to apply for Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay has been reinstated and extended to October 21, 2012. Service members and veterans whose military service was involuntarily extended under the “Stop Loss” program between the 9/11 terrorist attacks and Sept. 30, 2009, are eligible for special

retroactive pay. The special pay is compensation for the hardships the involuntary extensions caused, officials said. Eligible members or their beneficiaries may submit a claim to their respective military service to receive \$500 for each full or partial month served in a Stop Loss status. Because the majority

of those eligible had separated from the military, many eligible service members, veterans and their beneficiaries are not aware of the benefit. For more information, go to www.defense.gov/home/features/2010/0710_stoploss/.

Help for Wrongfully Foreclosed Service-members

There will soon be support for our servicemembers and veterans, who were wrongfully foreclosed upon or denied a lower interest rate on their mortgages. Under a new agreement, the Federal government will

- Review every servicemember foreclosed upon since 2006 and provide any who were wrongfully foreclosed upon with compensation equal to a minimum of lost equity, plus interest and \$116,785;
- Refund to servicemembers money lost because they



- were wrongfully denied the opportunity to reduce their mortgage payments through lower interest rates;
- Provide relief for servicemembers who are forced to sell their homes for less than the amount they owe on their mortgage due to a Permanent Change in Station;
- Pay \$10 million dollars into

- the Veterans Affairs fund that guarantees loans on favorable terms for veterans; and
- Extend certain foreclosure protections afforded under the Servicemember Civil Relief Act to servicemembers serving in harm's way.

For more information, visit www.justice.gov/crt/spec_topics/military.

Marriage Retreats for Returning Vets

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) is trying a new approach when it comes to caring for and healing our Nation's wounded Veterans. Now, in addition to repairing their damaged bodies and minds, USDVA is attempting to go one step further and repair their crumbling marriages.

Research shows that 70 percent of combat veterans are experiencing marital problems, with 20% of them deciding to divorce before they even return home. When the USDVA's marriage retreats first began, only veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts were being accepted. Since then, the program has been opened to anyone who's ever worn the uniform.

For information on upcoming marriage retreats call (706) 733-0188, extension 6118, 6114, or 6172.

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Children of Military Service Members Resource Guide

A new children's resource is available for parents, other family members and health care providers. Developed by Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic

Brain Injury (DCoE), the "Children of Military Service Members Resource Guide" is a quick-reference tool that addresses the mental and emotional well-being of military children. Whether concerns are associated with deployment, rehabilitation or reintegration—aspects that are common with military service—they can be challenging for the entire family unit, especially children. The resource guide is one way to help recognize and respond to the psychological and emotional health needs of children of military families. Age-appropriate resources

listed in the guide include books, films, websites and social media support groups on topics such as: deployment, homecoming, grief, mental and emotional health, moving and others..

To download a copy of the guide, visit resources@dcoeoutreach.org. If you can't find what you need or are looking for other types or resources related to psychological health or traumatic brain injury, contact the DCoE Outreach Center at (866) 966-1020 to speak with a trained, professional health resource consultant.

Disney Hiring 1,000+ Vets

The Walt Disney Company recently announced a new companywide initiative to hire and train more than 1,000 veterans over the next three years. Disney's *Heroes Work Here* program will also support military families and veterans during their transition into civilian life, host career fairs and participate in events designed to showcase opportunities for returning military personnel, and launch a national public awareness campaign to encourage all employers across the U.S. to hire veterans.

Disney CEO Robert Iger made the announcement at a shareholders meeting in Kansas City. "As a new generation of America's military men and women transition into civilian life, we are increasing our commitment and support for these modern day heroes," Iger said. "It's a

measure of our respect for how much they have sacrificed on our behalf, and our sincere gratitude for their extraordinary contributions to this country."

The company said it also plans to contribute money to selected non-profit organizations that provide training and other support services to veterans. In addition, Disney employees will participate in service projects with veterans organizations throughout the country.

The *Heroes Work Here* program will include recruitment efforts across all segments of The Walt Disney Company, including ESPN, the Disney-ABC Television Group, Disney Consumer Products, The Walt Disney Studios, and Disney Parks and Resorts.

For more information, visit disneycareers.com/en/working-here/heroes-work-here.

Veterans May Qualify for Additional Education Benefits

The Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) offers 12 months of retraining assistance to veterans who are:

- Unemployed;
- At least 35 but no more than 60 years old;
- Have an other than dishonorable discharge;
- Not eligible for any other USDVA education benefit program (e.g., the Post 9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment);

<< EDUCATION

- Not in receipt of USDVA compensation due to Individual Unemployability (IU);
- Not enrolled in a federal or state job training program; and
- Enrolled in a USDVA approved program of education offered by a community college or technical school

The program is limited to 45,000 participants from July 1, 2012 through September 30, 2012, and to 54,000 participants from October 1, 2012, through March 31, 2014. Participants may receive up to 12 months of assistance at the full-time payment rate under the Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty program (currently \$1,473 per month).

The program must lead to an Associate Degree, Non-College Degree, or a Certification, and train the veteran for a high demand occupation. To learn more and read frequently asked questions, visit www.gibill.va.gov/vrap. Additional details about VRAP, including information on how to apply, will be published at www.gibill.va.gov as they become available.

War Vets Help Train Wolf-Dogs at CA Rescue Center

Associated Press

It's been three months since a California animal rescue center retrieved 29 wolf-dogs from an Alaska tourist attraction that had fought the state over owning, breeding and selling the wolf-hybrids. Chains were so deeply embedded in the necks of two of the animals that they had to be surgically removed. Many developed limps because they'd never used the pads of their feet.

Now the task of taming the wolf-dogs has been given to three U.S. military veterans who say they can relate to the stress of trying to transition to a normal life. The program is called "Warriors and Wolves."

"I get along with the wolves," said one of the three, Stanley McDonald, a 10-year Navy vet who has been foreman of the Lockwood Animal Rescue Center in Frazier Park, about 75 miles northwest of Los Angeles, for 4-1/2 years.

McDonald said he knows what it is like to be homeless, alone and lost. "They've been in a bad situation, which I've been in most of my life. Most of them are afraid, taken away from the only thing they knew," he said.



"A great number of people are coming back from a combat environment and that's as stressful as can be. It's difficult to transition from that to civilian life," said William "Buzz" Varley, a Lockwood volunteer and retired Navy man who works for the California Department of Transportation.

The wolf-dogs are now thriving in small packs of two to six animals after joining 12 wolf-dogs already at the shelter, according to Lorin Lindner, who founded Lockwood with her husband, Navy veteran Matthew Simmons, in 2008.

Lindner said the wolf-dogs, who normally travel up to 40 miles a day, had been tethered in Alaska. Once they had room to run at Lockwood, they went lame because their muscles were not acclimated to the exercise.

<< WOLF-DOG

"It's taken three months, but we are just now noticing them running without limps," Lindner said.

The animals are fed high-priced, high-quality kibble made of buffalo, venison and game birds, in addition to five to 10 pounds of meat each day. As part of a landfill diversion program, markets in the area give the rescue group their expired meats "so we are not killing any additional animals to feed the wolf-dogs," Lindner said.

In Alaska, they had been fed raw moose meat to keep them looking good so tourists could get close enough to the animals to take their pictures for a \$5 fee.

Before the wolf-dogs arrived, Lindner and Simmons were running the sanctuary on \$10,700 a month. But with the new arrivals, that's jumped to \$15,500 a month, including salaries for the three veterans. To help pay the bills, Lindner and Simmons are inviting supporters of the sanctuary to volunteer, donate or sponsor a veteran or a wolf-dog or plant a fruit tree (it helps feed birds) in honor of a loved one.

Lindner, Simmons, the vets and volunteers built enclosures for the animals on their 20-acre sanctuary. Standing 10 feet tall, the enclosures include dig guards that are buried 5 feet deep.

Because some of the animals have bad hips and arthritis, Simmons is building soft-webbed trundle beds so they can sleep off the ground.

They've put out a plea to firehouses since old fire hose makes the best webbing.

Lindner's veterinarian took the sickest wolf-dog (she has another hybrid) and four of the animals have gone to other rescues. Eight others will be placed with other sanctuaries if those centers can build the proper enclosures.

Besides the wolf-dogs, Lockwood has four rescued horses, 16 parrots, six peacocks and a duck. "We rescued 33 koi fish from a house that was in foreclosure. My husband made a 200,000-gallon pond and now we have thousands of fish," Lindner said.

Lindner and Simmons also built a parrot sanctuary at the Greater Los Angeles Veteran's Administration Healthcare System complex, where Lindner worked as clinical director of New Directions, a program serving homeless veterans with drug or alcohol problems.

McDonald, 48, is the wolf program's biggest booster. He says he has been an alcoholic since he was 18. He spent 10 years in the Navy and was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. "I wasn't a mean or angry drunk," he said. "I would just take everything we had to buy alcohol."

Lindner met McDonald at New Directions, before "Warriors and Wolves." McDonald says he's learned from the animals and knew if he could help them, he could help himself. "I made a wonderful change," he said.

Since working with the animals, he's begun reconciling with his ex-wife and reconnected with a son, now 19, whom he'd lost touch with. His son didn't trust him at first, McDonald said. "It took some work by both of us. It took a lot of forgiving," said McDonald. "I'm back with my family doing things I love to do."

Home Modification Money Available to Disabled Vets

There is help for veterans with disabilities that make accessing or getting around their home difficult. The USDVA provides up to \$4,100 lifetime benefit for service-connected veterans and up to \$1,200 for non-service-connected veterans to make home improvements necessary for the continuation of treatment or for disability access to the home and essential lavatory and sanitary facilities.

Home Improvement and Structural Alterations grants provide for medically necessary improvements and/or structural changes to the veteran's residence for the following purposes:

- Allowing entrance to, or exit from, the veteran's residence.
- Use of essential lavatory and sanitary facilities.

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Student Veterans of America Accepting Scholarship Applications

Student Veterans of America is proud to announce the opening of applications for each of its three scholarships: Chapter Leader Scholarship, STEM Scholarship, and SVA Yellow Ribbon Scholarship. Each scholarship is worth up to \$10,000 and will be awarded during the 2012-2013 academic year. Each scholarship has a separate purpose as outlined below:

Chapter Leader Scholarship

Chapter officers have volunteered to help better the lives of their fellow veterans, but that responsibility requires a tremendous amount of time, energy, dedication, and passion. These leaders balance chapter activities, full course loads, and family obligations to ensure that the SVA mission is carried out at the local level. Without their hard work, SVA does not succeed.

Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) Scholarship

Much like the original GI Bill recipients of the 1940s and 50s, today's veterans will bring invaluable skills and spirit to businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies. These student veterans have the potential to usher in a new generation of American progress and to address some of our nation's most pressing needs. Other countries are quickly eclipsing our excellence in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). To compete in tomorrow's global economy we need to continue to develop new scientists, engineers, and mathematicians at home. Student veterans are well equipped to answer that challenge.

SVA Yellow Ribbon Scholarship

The GI Bill fails to adequately support all student veterans that are attending some private institutions or out-of-state public universities. Under current law, the Post 9/11 GI Bill supports student veterans at the highest in-state tuition rate. Universities do have an option to help supplement this cost through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Yellow Ribbon Program. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs matches every dollar that the university pledges to the Yellow Ribbon fund. However, some universities have failed to adequately fund the Yellow Ribbon Program, or even sign on to support student veterans.

Scholarship applications will be accepted until June 1, 2012 and finalists will be notified by August 1, 2012. All eligible student veterans are required to apply online at www.studentveterans.org.



About Student Veterans of America
SVA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit coalition of student veteran organizations on college campuses nationwide. SVA's mission is to provide military veterans with the resources, support, and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education and following graduation.

<< MODS

- Allowing accessibility to kitchen or bathroom sinks or counters.
- Improving entrance paths or driveways in immediate area of the home to facilitate access to the home by the veteran.
- Improving plumbing or electrical systems made necessary due to installation of dialysis equipment in the home.

To learn more about home modification benefits, contact the prosthetic representative at your USDVA medical facility or contact your County Veteran Service Office. To find the CVSO nearest you, visit www.cacvso.org. Click on "Contact Us," then click on your county of residence.

Yountville Home to Receive \$1M in VA Funding

To ensure California's State Veterans' Home in Yountville remains a comfortable and safe residence for Veterans, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) is awarding a grant to the state of \$1,043,522 for a new fire alarm system. USDVA's grant will cover approximately 65 percent of the estimated \$1,605,000 cost of the project.

California is currently home to 1.9 million veterans. With approximately 64% of those veterans now over the age of 50, the need for long-



term care for disabled and aging veterans is increasing rapidly. The Veterans Homes of California, which provide veterans with rehabilitative, residential, and medical care and services in a home-like environment, offer veterans an alternative to private, long-term facilities.

California operates six state Veterans homes and is planning two more.

These homes are residential care facilities offering medical, dental, pharmacy and rehabilitation services and social activities. Veterans age 55 and older, discharged from active military service under honorable conditions, may apply for admission. The age requirement is waived for disabled or homeless Veterans needing long-term care.

Veteran Sleep Disorders

Everyone looks forward to a good night's sleep. Sleep is refreshing and renewing and most people who sleep well wake up in the morning with a new sense of purpose and new goals for the day. But anyone who hasn't enjoyed a good night's sleep, especially for days, weeks, or months in a row, knows how difficult life can be when one is extremely fatigued all the time.

A recent study conducted by the University of Pittsburgh has

demonstrated that soldiers who recently returned from the war in Iraq are highly prone to developing severe sleep disorders. The study involved the comparison of 14 insomnia patients and 14 vets with post-deployment adjustment disorders and found that the vets displayed "significantly more severe disruptive nocturnal behaviors", including nightmares and involuntary body movements. Overall, the vets experienced significantly worse sleep quality than even those who were considered insomniacs. Some even experienced sleep apnea, which is characterized

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<< SLEEP

by one or more pauses in breathing while one sleeps.

Symptoms and signs of sleep disorders include:

- Irritability or sleepiness during the waking hours
- Falling asleep while driving
- Difficulty concentrating
- Slow reaction time
- Unprovoked emotional outbursts
- The need to take frequent naps
- The use of caffeine to stay awake

Why Sleep Disorders?

The main reason for sleep disorders or “a poor night’s sleep” among veterans and other soldiers is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The syndrome may be characterized by nightmares that cause the vet to replay terrible scenes from combat during the dream cycle. The nightmares might occur shortly after the experience and continue for weeks, months, or – in some cases – even years. These upsetting dreams are very common among veterans who have been in the midst of war and have seen the unspeakable and are unable to forget their horrid experiences.

Sleep apnea has also been proven to be secondary to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Often, however, PTSD is not the only cause of sleep apnea. Other issues contribute as well, such as obesity or tonsillar problems.

Treating Sleep Disorders

Often, when a veteran seeks help for a sleep disorder, he/she is asked

to begin by keeping a sleep diary. This includes facts about one’s sleeping habits, including total sleep hours, quality of sleep, food consumed before bed, feelings and moods before bed, and drugs or medications taken. A sleep partner is usually required for this journaling activity.

Behavioral and environmental change might be the first suggestion a doctor makes in combating sleep disorders. However, if Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is expected after a few initial consultations, psychological and pharmacological treatments for that disorder will be recommended.

The doctor may also send the vet to a sleep center. Some Veteran’s Hospitals have sleep centers on site. At such a facility, the patient will be observed and monitored throughout the night to determine sleep patterns, brain waves, heart rate, rapid eye movements, and more. The results will then be analyzed and a treatment program devised. Again, treatment may include drugs and/or psychotherapy.

Courtesy Navy Veterans Social Network

NOTE: If you are a veteran experiencing signs or symptoms of a sleep disorder, tell your doctor. If you do not have a doctor, contact your local County Veteran Service Officer for a list of veteran healthcare resources in your area. To find the CVSO nearest you, visit www.cacvso.org. Click on “Contact Us,” then click on your county of residence.

Veterans History Project

Have you got a story to tell? The Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center collects, preserves, and makes accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war.

The Project collects first-hand accounts of U.S. Veterans from the following wars:

- World War I (1914-1920)
- World War II (1939-1946)
- Korean War (1950-1955)
- Vietnam War (1961-1975)
- Persian Gulf War (1990-1995)
- Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts (2001-present)

In addition, those U.S. citizen civilians who were actively involved in supporting war efforts (such as war industry workers, USO workers, flight instructors, medical volunteers, etc.) are also invited to share their valuable stories.

Stories can be told through personal narratives (audio and videotaped interviews, memoirs), correspondence (letters, post cards, v-mail, personal diaries), and visual materials (photographs, drawings, scrapbooks).

To learn more or to share your story, visit www.loc.gov/vets or call (888) 371-5848 toll free.



The Barstow Veterans Home is Currently Accepting Applications for Residency in the Independent Living (Domiciliary), and Intermediate Nursing Levels of Care

The Veterans Home of California—Barstow is a 400-bed, long-term care facility located on 22 acres with a panoramic view of the Mojave River Valley. The high desert atmosphere offers a climate that is healthful, quiet and safe with very low air pollution. The Veterans Home provides California veterans with a living environment that protects their dignity and contributes to their feeling of self-reliance and self-worth. It offers three levels of care that provide continuity in the lives of residents in an atmosphere of dignity and respect.

1. Domiciliary Care (Independent living) for veterans who are self-sufficient and do not require assistance with activities of daily living. Non-nursing staff provides minimal supervision. Residents at this level of care have access to other levels of care and medical services.
2. Intermediate Nursing Care for veterans requiring some nursing assistance to perform activities of daily living. Licensed nursing staff assist veterans with medications and treatments.
3. Skilled Nursing Care for veterans who require a higher level of nursing care and require assistance with many activities of daily living.

Although this Veterans Home offers three levels of care, space is primarily available in the Independent Living (Domiciliary), and Intermediate Nursing levels of care.

Amenities include:

- Room and board – three meals plus snacks
- Medical care and medications
- Optical care, dental care and podiatry services
- Transportation services to all medical appointments

and off-campus activities

- Additional professional services include a beauty/barber shop, multi-purpose room and limited banking services
- Opportunities for worship for all denominations through the Chaplaincy Program
- A modern fitness center and exercise classes
- Library, cable television, and wireless Internet
- Housekeeping and laundry services
- Caring and compassionate staff, and
- Variety of community outings and an enhanced activity program

The Veterans Home of California—Barstow enjoys the strong support from the local community as well as camaraderie from the neighboring Marine Corps Logistics Base and the National Training Center at Fort Irwin.

Veterans Homes of California are also located in Chula Vista, Lancaster, Ventura, West Los Angeles, and Yountville. Veterans Homes are currently under construction in Fresno and Redding. Veterans considering assisted living are encouraged to apply to any of the Veterans Homes of California. Spouses are also eligible to apply with the veteran.

For admission information, contact:

Veterans Home of California—Barstow
100 E. Veterans Parkway
Barstow, CA 92311
(800) 746-0606, ext. 1

CalVet Invites Newsletter Submissions

CalVet invites County Veteran Services Officers and representatives from government and nonprofit organizations that serve California veterans to submit articles for possible inclusion in the CalVet Newsletter.

View submission guidelines at www.calvet.ca.gov/Files/News/Newsletters/NewsletterGuidelines.pdf.

FOLLOW US!



UPCOMING EVENTS



APRIL 13

Job Fair for Military Veterans
Rancho Los Angeles County Metro
Transportation Authority
One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, CA
10:00 am - 1:00 pm

APRIL 14

7th Annual Veterans Resource Fair
State Veterans & Family Benefits &
Resource Fair Advisory Council
Santa Clara County Fair Grounds,
San Jose, CA
Contact: csm9gastelo@aol.com

APRIL 27-28

**National Women Veterans
Association of America Conference
Sexual Assault, Suicide,
and Solutions**
DoubleTree Hotel
1646 Front Street, San Diego, CA
nwvaa2012conference.eventbrite.com

APRIL 27-29

**American Ex-Prisoners of War
Department of California State
Convention**
Embassy Suites
100 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, CA
Contact: Sascha Jean Jensen
(707) 448-2909

MAY 8

**Mayfest – In Celebration of Older
Americans**
Sponsored by City of Los Angeles
Department of Aging
L.A. Turner Center
8946 Sepulveda Blvd., Westchester, CA
10 am - 1 pm
Contact: Jeanne Bonfilio
(424) 832-8219

MAY 15-17

**13th National Association of the
State Women Veteran Coordinators
Training Conference**
Double Tree Hotel
2001 Point West Way, Sacramento, CA
Contact: Lindsey Wathen (916) 653-2327

CalVet News

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Sacramento, CA 95814
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F (916) 653-2611
pao@calvet.ca.gov

Note: To view more events, visit www.calvet.ca.gov/news/newsletters.aspx

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